

***Legislation Estimated to Save Taxpayers Nearly \$200 Million***

**Washington, D.C.** – Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) and Rep. Kristi Noem (R-SD) today introduced common sense legislation to encourage good land stewardship practices and preserve habitats for pheasants, ducks and other wildlife on native sod and on grasslands that haven't been farmed in the past.

This legislation would reduce crop insurance assistance for the first four years for crops grown on native sod and certain grasslands converted to cropland. By reducing crop insurance assistance so that is proportionate with the production capability of this land, rather than insuring it at the same rate as land that has been farmed for years, this legislation could save taxpayers nearly \$200 million over 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

**“This legislation is a win-win. It will save taxpayer dollars and conserve critical wildlife habitat while allowing farmers to manage their lands as they see fit,”** said Rep. Walz. **“By working together and promoting common sense conservation practices we can protect critical wildlife habitat, support our farmers, and support the hunting and fishing industry that is an integral part of our state’s economy.”**

**“South Dakota farmers already strike a healthy balance between agriculture production and conservation, and this legislation helps them continue that trend,”** said Rep. Noem. **“It’s just common sense to reduce crop insurance assistance for less productive land that will save taxpayers money and help preserve critical habitat for pheasants, ducks, and other game species that help support South Dakota’s hunting industry. I look forward to working with my colleagues to include this legislation into the House version of the Farm Bill.”**

The wildlife recreation industry is an integral part of Minnesota’s economy, bringing in \$4.3 billion into the state. Protecting native sod and grassland that are vital habitats for both game and nongame wildlife will help continue the success of this industry. Native sod and grasslands that cannot be verified as having ever been tilled have significantly less yield potential for the first several years compared to land that has been cropped for years. Producers should crop native sod and grassland based only on production potential rather than by inflated crop insurance benefits.

Pheasants Forever and the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association are two of the many groups that have voiced their support for this legislation.

**“Sodsaver is one of Pheasants Forever’s critical priorities for inclusion in the 2012 Farm Bill. South Dakota’s grasslands are a treasured resource important to pheasants, our economy and our way of life,”** explained Mike Stephenson, Pheasants Forever’s Regional Representative for South Dakota. **“We are thrilled to see the bipartisan leadership from Representatives Noem and Walz in moving this important habitat legislation forward.”**

**“We appreciate Rep. Noem and Walz’s efforts to lead on this common sense measure,”** said Jeff Smeenk, President of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association. **“Cattlemen across the country understand the importance of preserving our grasslands and providing grazing opportunities for our producers.”**

The sodsaver legislation introduced by Reps. Noem and Walz is identical to the provision included by Senator John Thune in the Farm Bill passed by the Senate Agriculture Committee. Importantly, this legislation does not prevent producers from making their own planting decisions.

Specifically, the legislation would:

- Limit crop insurance coverage to 65 percent of the applicable T-Yield until the acreage has four years of crop production.
- Limit the premium subsidy to 50 percentage points less than the premium subsidy that would otherwise be available until the acreage has four years of crop production.
- Make the acreage ineligible for yield substitution.

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